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# DEPARTMENT OF VISITING NURSING AND SOCIAL WELFARE



IN CHARGE OF

EDNA L. FOLEY, R.N.

[To keep this department up-to-date and helpfully interesting, nurses in social work of every description and superintendents of district nursing associations are asked to put the address of its editor—104 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago—on their mailing files for items, clippings, and annual reports.]

## ITEMS

MARYLAND.—The second annual report of the work of the tuberculosis nurses of the Baltimore Health Department is another helpful pamphlet, full of suggestions for nurses elsewhere struggling with this disease and its infinite variety of problems. Of special interest is the fact that of the 3000 cases cared for during the year 1911, one-third were known to the relief-giving agencies, while the remaining two-thirds were not only entirely self-supporting but some were "more so." Thus Baltimore is demonstrating that its health department nurses are also public servants and welcomed as such by the citizens. It is a step in the right direction when the people call for the services of the health department as they call for the patrol or the fire engine when their lives or property are in danger. The old feeling that people would object to the visits of a special tuberculosis nurse, or a nurse representing a city department, is dying hard but the fact remains that the right sort of a woman, in uniform or not, is welcome in the homes of these unfortunates. The report is paragraphed under various sub-headings, Nursing Staff, Character of Work, Prophylactic Supplies, Patients, Physicians, Dispensaries, Sanatoria, Hospitals for Advanced Cases, Relief, Milk and Eggs, Fumigation and Results, with an appendix of a very carefully planned and executed series of nine charts. These give a very clear idea of the growth of the work as well as of the excellence of its record system. The nurse-in-chief, Ellen N. La Motte, has also written a most interesting appreciation of "The Value of Record Keeping" in the October *Visiting Nurse Quarterly*.

PENNSYLVANIA.—The Visiting Nurse Association of Erie, with the help of Miss Shaw, superintendent of the Buffalo D. N. A., has reor-

ganized and has as its superintendent, Bertha M. Tillotson, R.N. (Homœopathic Hospital, Rochester, 1905). Miss Tillotson took the post-graduate course of the Victorian Order of Canada and was on the staff of the Buffalo Visiting Nurse Association before going to Erie. At present there are two nurses on the staff and a third is needed.

NEW YORK.—A recent editorial of the *Ladies' Home Journal* expressed the conviction that the world would need less visiting nurses if there were more trained visiting housekeepers. Nurses have always known that "diet" was an important part of a patient's treatment, but the ability to evolve said diet from a "\$12.00 a week, six mouths to feed" income is not gained in the average training school, where one's knowledge of food preparation has been largely gained in a hospital diet kitchen where private trays only are prepared. Wherever the visiting housekeeper has had this and the training gained in the big school of experience, plus native common-sense, she has filled a long-felt want. Frequent requests for nurses who have had this training are being sent to Mrs. Annie M. Hansen of the Buffalo League for the Protection of Immigrants, whose paper on "The Visiting Housekeeper" brought forth such lively discussion at the Visiting Nursing Session of the American Nurses' Association last June. During the past month Mrs. Hansen visited Indianapolis, at the request of the Business Men's Club, addressed seven meetings and had a number of private interviews besides. Now Indianapolis wants a trained visiting housekeeper who understands as well some of the problems of the immigrant.

SUSANNE FORREST ROBBINS, whose successful Christmas tree at the old Mattapan Day Camp for tuberculosis patients is still a standard for such outdoor festivities in the minds of the patients of Boston, is nurse-in-charge of the Medical Welfare Department of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company at its home office in New York City. Nearly 4000 people are employed in these offices, and a completely equipped dispensary, consisting of nurses' office, two service rooms, two rest rooms and an isolation room for emergencies, is maintained for them. This work, which is the Company's welfare work for its own employees, is described in an interesting little pamphlet prepared for distribution at the recent Congress on Hygiene and Demography. There are many thoughtfully planned details of this work that will interest industrial nurses, but two in particular, the free luncheon given every noon to the employees and the courses in business English, stenography and type-writing, together with the free circulating library of more than 6000

books, are unusual and worth copying elsewhere. This pamphlet can be secured from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's home office and should be read by all welfare workers.

ILLINOIS.—At present, the staff of the Chicago Visiting Nurse Association numbers 61 nurses, and the weekly conferences of all the nurses have been changed to form smaller conferences, each group meeting at the main office once a week. On the second Tuesday of each month a tea is given for the staff and the directors by one of the latter at the office. When outside speakers are invited, all of the staff attends the lecture. During October, the special talks were given by Dr. William Healy, director of the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute, Chicago, and Dr. Lee K. Frankel of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

MASSACHUSETTS.—Visiting nurses are nothing if not reticent in telling about their work, and they unfortunately rarely tell the interesting parts of their work to the general public, consequently their best stories are kept within the nursing circle. The following extracts from two very interesting letters from a visiting nurse in Massachusetts have recently come to our desk, and they are so typical of a nurse's daily life that they are sure to interest not only visiting nurses but also nurses in other fields. The name of the town and of the nurse are purposely withheld and the reason why this is done is explained in the first letter.

“October, 1912.

“A visiting nurse was suggested as being something that would be a real necessity and help to the people in these two towns and at first the suggestion was met with considerable opposition, as apparently there was no family poor enough to require the services of a district nurse. I began work November, 1911, and up to the present have made 1560 calls and for the past five weeks have had an assistant with me. During this time I have had much to do which does not come under the heading of nursing. Open cesspools, vaults to be cleansed, instruction in cases of tuberculosis until such time as a vacancy occurred in a sanatorium, fumigation of homes, adenoid cases, procuring necessities for families, also helping to get a carriage for a child in a spinal cast (by writing to the manufacturers and asking them to let me have a carriage which was not ‘quite perfect’ but otherwise very comfortable and within the means of the parents), a child with ricketts taken to the hospital and fitted with braces and boots, another anæmic, nervous child's application made to a sanatorium (holiday), (she had a month's vacation, is greatly improved in health and is not nervous). Reported a case of wilful

neglect of baby, to Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Child taken to hospital and mother warned and advised to do better. Reported a case of incest, father sent to jail and girl to Waverly. This man was a drunkard and had abused his wife. They have nine children. The baby was born after the arrest of the father. The mother has been a good hard-working woman, supporting the home and family, but she had had a great deal of trouble, losing two little children with diphtheria, and, as you know, these people will have such elaborate funerals—she owed a sum of money. After her baby came, and as soon as she was strong enough, I mentioned to several ladies that I could get them help for so many hours each day. I then asked the son of the local provision dealer, when he was around for orders, to tell the people in the wealthy homes that there was a reliable woman who would take washing at home. In the meantime I saw her landlord and told him the particulars of this case and asked him to put her yard in good condition and to put in some posts for a clothes-line; this he did. I have a 'Comfort Fund' of \$5.00 and from this I purchased a clothes-line and pins, also a basket. Gave her some old sheeting for her ironing board and awaited results. In the course of a few days a woman arranged with her to take home two large washings each week—she now has an income which averages between \$11.00 and \$12.00 weekly. Has the washing sent and called for. In addition she has four car-men rooming with her, and feels more prosperous and contented than she has been for years. She is paying up her old debts and avoiding new ones. Then there was an old lady who had celebrated her one hundredth birthday last spring. A poor shiftless kind of woman was looking after her in a fashion. If she wanted to go and visit, she used to leave the old lady alone for hours. The latter's mind was enfeebled and she used to do silly little things, nothing really bad, but irritating. In consequence they had got her ready for the insane asylum, when I heard of it. I thought it was a poor kind of ending to an old lady's life, more especially when she had been always ready and willing to help where there was trouble. So I put on my 'thinking cap' and wondered what could be done to prevent her being sent away. There is a young girls' club in the village. I asked them if they would pledge a little each week in order that she might be boarded and cared for better. They voted \$2.00 per week and promised to look after her clothing. So with the \$5.00 she already paid I was successful in placing her in a very comfortable home, where she is well taken care of. I saw her the other day pottering out in the garden, and I confess to a feeling of satisfaction upon seeing her so happy in a setting suited to honorable old age. I find in regard to hygiene that I

accomplish much through the children. A mother thinks that Johnny is real cute if he demands to sleep with open windows. The same mother would look askance at a nurse were she to suggest such a thing, and so it is with their toothbrushes and towels. The children are the ones I make friends with first. Also I have reported a case of masturbation and laid the facts before our committee, and it was about this I wanted to know something. Do you know of any course of lectures that would cover this ground and which would be suitable to read to a meeting of the mothers and women who ought to know that these things exist, and would be able to watch out for this evil? In a small community one is handicapped. The doctors do not co-operate in the same way as city doctors do, because of public opinion, and I feel that in order to retain the confidence of the people I ought not to take too active a part, and at the same time I can't let these things slide because of this. The work is so absorbing and full of interest. Helping people who are in trouble to get work and gain their independence when they have about come to the end of the tether is something you lose when on private duty. The schoolmaster of the Boys' Scout Camp invited me to give a demonstration of bandaging and some first aid work, and yesterday I had a request from the minister of the Congregational Church to give some of my experiences. He says: 'Without betraying confidences could you not give enough specific instances of suffering and the relief of suffering to interest the people in what you are doing.' This is another thing I'm not sure about. Would it be advisable to do this in a small town where people know each other so well?"

(The advice sent this nurse in regard to telling patients' stories before a local audience was that whereas it would be difficult to tell of her experiences in that town, she doubtless could tell enough visiting nurses' stories, borrowed from the *Quarterly* or other publications, so that her audience would be interested and impressed with the importance of visiting nurse work. Then, of course, it would be necessary to give these stories a local color of their own cities. In small towns there is so much more time for idle chatter and gossip that the nurse makes a very great mistake when she tries to interest the more prosperous citizens of her community by rehearsing to them publicly the troubles of the less fortunate.)